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Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SPOP
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S ROLE IN DEALING WITH PRESSING GLOBAL PROBLEMS -- POPULATIONS GROWTH AND ADEQUATE FOOD PRODUCTION

1. SUMMARY: THE SENEGALESE HAVE NEGLECTED THESE VITAL QUESTIONS FOR THE FIRST FIFTEEN YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE, AND THE RESULT HAS BEEN A DISASTER. FAR TOO GREAT A PERCENTAGE OF SENEGAL'S FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS ARE BEING EXPENDED TO PURCHASE FOOD ABROAD, THEREBY INHIBITING DEVELOPMENT. THE URBAN AREAS ARE OVERCROWDED WITH TOO MANY CHILDREN AND SQUATTERS RESULTING IN SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS THAT THE COUNTRY'S MINIMAL RESOURCES CANNOT COPE WITH. EVEN NOW, SOME GOVERNMENT LEADERS DO NOT CONSIDER POPULATION A MAJOR ELEMENT IN THESE PROBLEMS, PREFERRING TO FOCUS ALMOST ENTIRELY ON MEASURES TO INCREASE FOOD PRODUCTION. THEY SAY THAT SENEGAL'S POPULATION DENSITY IS SO LOW AS TO PRECLUDE A POPULATION PROBLEM, FORGETTING THAT SENEGAL'S FRAGILE SAHELIAN ECOLOGY IS ALREADY SUPPORTING TOO MANY PEOPLE AND ANIMALS FOR ITS CAPACITY. POPULATION IS SEEN MORE AS A SOCIAL THAN AND ECONOMIC PROBLEM, ESPECIALLY IN TERMS OF THE BURDEN OF UNSPACED CHILDBIRTH ON URBAN WOMEN. AS A RESULT, BIRTH CONTROL IS BECOMING MORE ACCEPTABLE POLITICALLY, AND THERE IS GROWING DEMAND IN THE CITIES. WE ARE
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ENCOURAGING THIS TREND IN OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH LEADERS AND TARGET AUDIENCES. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN US-SENEGALESE RELATIONS, AID IS BEING ALLOWED TO PROPOSE A CHILD SPACING PROJECT. ANOTHER POSITIVE LEMENT IS THE ASSIGN-MENT OVER THE PAST THREE OR FOUR YEARS OF THE HIGHEST PRIORITY IN PLANNING AND BUDGETING TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF BOTH RAINFED AND IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE. MOST FOREIGN

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ASSISTANCE, INCLUDING OUR OWN, IS CONCENTRATED IN THIS AREA. END SUMMARY.

2. WHEN ANDREWYOUNG VISITED DAKAR IN APRIL, HE ASKED PRIME MINISTER DIOUF ABOUT POPULATION PROBLEMS IN SENEGAL. DIOUF, WHO IS PRESIDENT SENGHOR'S MOST LIKELY SUCCESSOR, EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT SENEGAL'S LOW POPULATION DENSITY INDICATES THAT THE COUNTRY DOES NOT HAVE A POPULATION GROWTH PROBLEM. HE SAID THERE IS AMPLE UNOCCUPIED LAND, AND THAT SENEGAL ACTUALLY NEEDS MORE PEOPLE TO CULTIVATE IT. BUT, DIOUF SAID, MANY SENEGALESE WOMEN ARE SUFFERING FROM UNSPACED BIRTHS. THEY HAVE TOO MANY CHILDREN TOO SOON, AND THEY ARE TIRED AND SICK. THEY SHOULD HAVE ACCESS TO CHILD SPACING INFORMATION SO THEY CAN DECIDE HOW MANY CHILDREN THEY WILL HAVE. HE SAID THE GOS IS PLANNING TO MAKE THIS INFORMATION AVAILABLE.

3. ASKED ABOUT SENEGAL'S DEVELOPMENT PLANS, PRIME MINISTER DIOUF SAID THAT AGRICULTURE IS THE NUMBER ONE PRIORITY, AND WITHIN THIS SECTOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN FOOD IS THE PRIORITY OF PRIORITIES. HE SAID THAT SENEGAL'S OUTLAYS OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE ON FOOD IMPORTS ARE BECOMING INTOLERABLE. DIOUF'S DESIGNA-
TION OF FOOD AS THE PRIORITY OF PRIORITIES IS A REPEAT OF WHAT PRESIDENT SENGHOR HAS SAID IN MANY STATEMENTS ON ECONOMIC POLICY. INDEED, AS A RESULT OF THE DISAS-
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TROUS SAHELIAN DROUGHT IN 1972 THE GOS IS GIVING HIGH PRIORITY TO INCREASED FOOD PRODUCTION. IT IS ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVES OF THE FOUR-YEAR PLAN 1977-1981. EMPHASIS IS BEING GIVEN BOTH TO DEVELOPMENT OF IRRIGATED PERIMETERS AND IMPROVEMENT OF RAINFED AGRICULTURE, AND LIVESTOCK. AID'S SENEGAL PROGRAM AS WELL AS THOSE OF OTHER DONORS ARE CONCENTRATED INTHIS AREA. REGIONAL AGRICLTURAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS HAVE BEEN SET UP TO IMPLEMENT WORK IN THE PRINCIPAL AGRICULTURAL REGIONS AND CONSIDERABLE EMPHASIS IS BEING PLACED ON PROVIDING DIRECT EXTENSION SERVICES TO THE FARGGER THROUGH THESE REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.

4. IN MY CONVERSATIONS WITH GOVERNMENT MINISTERS AND THEIR KEY ADVISERS, THE SAME THEMES KEEP COMING UP WITH RESPECT TO POPULATION. MORE AND MORE WOMEN ARE RE-
QUESTING BIRTH CONTROL INFORMATION BECAUSE THEY ARE TIRED OF TOO MANY CHILDREN, OR WANT TO AVOID WHAT THEIR

NOTE BY OC/T: MESSAGE DELAYED IN TRANSMISSION.

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MOTHERS WENT THROUGH. THE ORTHODOX MOSLEM TABOOS ON BIRTH CONTROL ARE SLOWLY BREAKING DOWN, ESPECIALLY IN THE CITIES. THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN WAITING UNTIL THE ELECTIONS WERE COMPLETED (FEBRUARY, 1978) BEFORE OPENING THE DOOR TO CHILD SPACING PROJECTS. THE PRESIDENT HAS RECENTLY APPOINTED TWO WOMEN TO GOVERNMENT PORTFOLIOS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN SENEGAL'S HISTORY. BOTH OF THESE LADIES ARE STRONG ADVOCATES OF CHILD SPACING PROGRAMS, AND WE SHOULD SEE SOME CONCRETE RESULTS SOON.

5. IN FACT, SENEGAL DOES HAVE ON RECORD AN ACCEPTANCE IN PRINCIPLE OF THE VALUE OF A NATIONAL FAMILY PLANNING POLICY AS A COMPLEMENT TO SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS. THE DECEMBER 1976 EXTRAORDINARY CONGRESS OF THE GOVERNING SOCIALIST PARTY (77 DAKAR A-15) AGREED ON MAJOR POLICY GOALS FOR THE NATION TO FOLLOW BETWEEN NOW AND THE END OF THIS CENTURY. AMONG THE PRINCIPAL TASKS ENVISAGED IN THE CONGRESS' GENERAL RESOLUTION ARE APPLICATION OF A NATIONAL FAMILY PLANNING POLICY CAPABLE OF LIMITING THE POPULATION GROWTH RATE AND CONTINUATION OF STEPS TO END THE POPULATION EXODUS FROM THE RURAL AREAS AND REDUCE INEQUALITIES BETWEEN THE REGIONS.

6. ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT POINT IS AID'S RECENT MEETING
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WITH THE NEW MINISTER OF HEALTH. A PROPOSED AID-

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FINANCED PROJECT FOR PROVIDING FAMILY PLANNING INSTRUC-
TION AND COMMODITIES TO GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED CLINICS
HAD BEEN STALLED FOR MORE THAN A YEAR. MINISTER GAVE
GO-AHEAD TO AID SENDING PROJECT PAPER DESIGN TEAM TO
SENEGAL EARLY JUNE TO WORK CLOSELY WITH MINISTRY
OFFICIALS IN FINALIZATION OF PROJECT WHICH ENVISIONS
APPROXIMATELY $1 MILLION EXPENDITURE OVER THREE-YEAR
PERIOD IN DIRECT AID ASSISTANCE.

7. DURING A LUNCHEON AT MY RESIDENCE IN APRIL IN HONOR
OF A DELEGATION FROM THE US NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NEGRO
WOMEN, I MET SOME DYNAMIC SENEGALESE WOMEN WHO ARE ALREADY
WAY AHEAD OF THEIR OWN GOVERNMENT. THEY ARE RUNNING
NEIGHBORHOOD MATERNITY AND CHILD HEALTH CLINICS IN
DAKAR WHERE THE DEMAN FOR BIRTH CONTROL ASSISTANCE IS
GREATER THAN THE SUPPLY.

8. CONCLUSION: IN RELATION TO FOOD PRODUCTION AND
SENEGAL'S FRAGILE SAHELIAN ECOLOGY, WE DO NOT FIND
MUCH POLITICAL SENSITIVITY TO POPULATION AS AN ELEMENT
OF THE OVERALL PROBLEM. WE STILL HAVE A MAJOR EDUCA-
TIONAL JOB IN FRONT OF US. BUT THERE IS A GROWING
POLITICAL AWARENESS OF THE SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL COSTS
OF EXCESSIVE POPULATION GROWTH, AS WELL AS A GROWING
DEMAND FROM WOMEN FOR BIRTH CONTROL SERVICES. THIS
GIVES US A FOOT IN THE DOOR, AND IS ALLOWING US TO
START WORK ON AID'S FIRST EVER POPULATION PROJECT IN
SENEGAL. IN ADDITION, THE GOVERNMENT HAS ASSIGNED THE
HIGHEST PRIORITY TO INCREASED FOOD PRODUCTION WHERE
MOST FOREIGN AID PROGRAMS, INCLUDING OUR OWN, ARE NOW
CONCENTRATING. WE WILL KEEP WORKING TO INSTILL AN
UNDERSTANDING OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POPULATION
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AND FOOD SELF-SUFFICIENCY.

9. RECOMMENDATION: PRESIDENT SENGHOR WILL HAVE CONVERSA-
TIONS WITH PRESIDENT CARTER AND SECRETARY VANCE ON JUNE 8.
POPULATION SHOULD BE PLACED ON ONE OF THE TWO
AGENDAS. SENGHOR WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY RAISE THE FOOD
PROBLEM, AND POPULATION COULD BE INTRODUCED NATURALLY
IN THAT CONTEXT.
COHEN

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